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A TOUCH

AT

THE FINE ARTS.

H. Alken, Del.t

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS_ *All Effect_The subject far from good, but Rich.*

London, Published by Tho.s M.c Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26, Haymarket, 1824.

A TOUCH

AT

THE FINE ARTS:

ILLUSTRATED BY

Twelve Plates,

WITH DESCRIPTIONS,

BY

HENRY ALKEN.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY THOMAS M'LEAN,

Repository of Wit and Humour,

No. 26, *HAYMARKET.*

1824.

PREFACE.

AN attempt to elucidate, by graphic delineations, a variety of terms generally and perhaps exclusively made use of by artists, amateurs, connoisseurs, virtuosos, and the like, is the laudable object of this Work. Long, indeed, has a generous public been, doubtless, puzzled in the endeavour to discover some ray of meaning to those *glowing*, *brilliant*, and *forcible* phrases which the critical catalogues, "*Catalogues Raisonnées*," &c. of the day are woefully burthened with.

Ever willing to contribute to the gratification and amusement of his most liberal patrons, the proprietor of this humorous display respectfully anticipates a continuance of their favors: in doing this, let it not be imputed to him that he uncivilly would bring an unwelcome odium on the Sons of the Pallet;—far from it: he kindly lends his aid to those *expressive* lovers of the arts, and would further advise, that while he thus friendly jogs them on the elbow, they will have the *pleasing* condescension to place everything in its *proper light*.

Pl. 1.

W. Alken Del.

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS. ___ *An Imposing Effect.*

London, Published by Tho.s M.c Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26, Haymarket. 1824

PLATE I.

An IMPOSING *effect.*

THIS subject is *cleanly* done, although not likely to *please every one*, yet similar to first rate works of *art*, tells its own tale. The *sharpness* of outline, and *neatness* of *finish*, displayed in the principal figures, are exquisitely characteristic, and *very imposing*. The knowledge of *design* evinced in this piece is another proof of its merit; there is also much *general understanding* of *art* displayed, mixed with too much *simplicity* in a portion of the picture, to produce a complete *harmony of feeling* throughout, but there is in many respects a *playful character* about it, and we do not think the *artists* will *lose* much by it.

W. Alken, Del.

A TOUCH at the FINE ARTS.—Unpleasant in Effect.—but the keeping is Good.

London, Published by Thos. M'Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26 Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE II.

An unpleasant effect, but the KEEPING IS GOOD.

ALTHOUGH we allow there is a great *want of freedom* about this design, there is still much *good keeping* displayed in various points of the picture. The *confinement of these subjects* does not admit of the full expansion of the artist's genius, and throws a *clear obscure* over much of the picturesque effect that distinguish these pleasing performances; but the *repose* and *stillness* which reigns throughout; the *contemplative serenity* of the *objects* around, prepossess the spectator at once, *bars* his prejudices, and *rivets* him as it were in the *chains* of his admiration.

H.r Alken Del.t

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS.—*A Moving Effect—the Execution Rapid.*

London, Published by Tho.s M.c Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26, Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE III.

A MOVING *effect, the execution rapid.*

FEW like our artist are so much at home in this *stage* of the arts; a glance at the subject will prove that great *pains* are here taken; the *rapidity* of the outline is quite overpowering, and proposes to the *wandering eye*, a happy union of MOVING effect, joined with intense *feeling* and *expression*; it runs athwart the vista of our fancy with the decisive celerity of lightning; the very luggage on the coach seems in imminent danger of its life—so happily has the artist given effect to inanimate nature. The man of sensibility and gusto *passes* with reluctance this animating scene, and acknowledges that painting at *this rate* will soon *outrun* all *rivals* in the *race* of competition.

H.R. Alken. Del.t

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS_ *A Striking Effect_ The handling by no means good, or pleasant to the eye.*

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PLATE IV.

A STRIKING *effect, but not pleasant to the eye.*

THE subject of this piece must be allowed to be full of *life*, and in the genuine *Corinthian taste*, perfectly coinciding with the distinguished rage for this branch of the *fine arts*, that ornamented the era of the painter. The *eye* speedily discovers its *forcible* yet sprightly feeling, although the vigor of style is awkwardly apparent, conveying to some of the *cogniscenti* more of the *rude* Doric than the elegance of the Corinthian style; there are many however, to whom the subject is disagreeable, who are inclined to exclaim with Doctor Walcot,

> **" Despite the equal chance, to lose or win them,**
>
> **" I'd rather read of battles, than be in them."**

We confess ourselves of this class of philosophers.

PLATE V.

(SEE FRONTISPIECE.)

All effect, the subject far from good but rich.

THIS is a subject more *beautiful* in point of *brilliants*, than *brilliant* in point of *beauty*. The colouring seems laid on, to use an expression of John Wilkes, "with a trowel," and as if it was solely intended to hide defects—the nose for instance in the original, is much coloured over and softened down in the likeness; but how much better would it have been to have made no nose at all. The artist has also made a most judicious abridgment of the neck in his portrait. The gusto, or to use a more appropriate term the disgusto, of this piece is its *leading feature*.

Hy Alken, Del.t

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS. — *A Forcible Effect.*

London, Published by Thos. Mc Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26 Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE VI.

A FORCIBLE *effect.*

ALTHOUGH this makes a good *plate*, the acute collector will at once discover, that the materials forming the most *valuable portion* of it, although *precious* in their place, have been mostly *stolen*, from the original *master*, on which account the *rich silvery* tint produced, does little credit to the performance. There has evidently been great *want of keeping* observable. Notwithstanding the *cautious* yet *decisive* and *bold* style of the figures in the foreground, the *delicacy of touch* is more to be surprised at than imitated. In fine, the most inexperienced amateur discovers the source of this *rich display of art*, and will not patronize so gross a *plagiarism*.

H.r Alken. Del.t

A Touch *at the* Fine Arts... *A Sudden Effect.*

London, Published by Thos. Mc Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26, Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE VII.

A SUDDEN *effect.*

SUDDEN in effect, the declension of the artist's powers are here self-evident, as the figure who seems likely to be *broken on the wheel* could testify, were it *worth his* WHILE; the grouping is *rather confused*, but the characters are *well marked*, and likely to continue so for life; the chin of the stout gentleman in the cart, stands *well out* on the canvas, and affords a good subject for *handling*—as the lady beneath seems anxious to prove. In the execution of this *picturesque* and *spirited* piece, *chance* appears to have concurred with genius; and taking it as a valuable *illustration* of the *laws* of *gravity*, it may be considered as fairly entitled to a conspicuous place in the connoisseur's collection.

W.ª Allen Del.ᵗ

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS. *A Surprising Effect, but no Execution.*

London, Published by Thos. M.ª Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26 Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE VIII.

A surprising effect, but no EXECUTION.

THE *want* of *execution* in this picture, may be at once remarked by a JUDGE, but it is in some cases, a *pardon*-able and even a *pleasing* desideratum. A strong interest is evidently excited, and the contrast must be considered to be singularly felicitous. The figure with the scroll is a most desirable *relief* to the centre one. The light and shade of this picture, does away with the sombre aspect, and by a *judicious* admixture of both, the artist has contrived to gratify the eye and heart.

W.m Alken. Del.

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS. ——. *A Very Warm Effect.*

London, Published by Tho.s M.c Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 20, Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE IX.

A very WARM *effect.*

THE most *vivid* admiration is here confessedly *kindled;* the *fire* of *genius*, and the *genius of fire*, are both *elementally* displayed, and shows the artist is *fully insured* of their joint effect, although the excessive warmth breaks the *repose* and *stillness* of the scene. There is also a *partial nakedness* in the design, but which does not altogether place the figures in a less *natural state;* the attitude of the female figure, is also highly picturesque, displaying a *vivacity* of *feeling* truly animating, relieved by the *glowing shadows* of the mae, produced by unexpected *lights*, though natural causes.

H.R Alken. Del.

A TOUCH at the FINE ARTS.——A powerful Effect—but the subject rather hurried

London, Published by Tho.s M.cLean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26 Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE X.

A powerful effect, but the subject rather HURRIED.

IN this charming chef-d'œuvre, the bursting of a steam vessel, the artist displays the powerful *effervescence* of this style; the eye roves not in search of spirit, his pencil enters at once into the regions of the *beau ideal*, and *irresistibly carries us along with it*. Every thing it touches is animated with *new life*, he sets no bounds to his vigorous fancy, but *bursts* through the *confined* sphere of *mechanical art*, into the wide *ocean* of the imagination, of which *engine* he has fully availed himself; although the *power breaks* out abruptly, the foreshortening of the figures is in the best taste and *feeling*, and the *grouping* of the whole piece is *delightfully characteristic*, and much varied from *common place*. The introduction of part of the machinery in the corner is done with great advantage, and forms a dignified and appropriate back ground.

Pl. 11.

W.m Alken, Del.t

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS, *A Spirited Effect—but no order kept in grouping of the Figures.*

London, Published by Tho.s M.c Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26 Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE XI.

A SPIRITED *effect, but no order kept in the grouping.*

IN this *classic* performance, we at once recognize another choice morceau of the *Corinthian* school; so full of *freedom*, life, and *spirit*. Without any order in the grouping, we yet find a powerful effect produced from the most careless touches, trusting all to native genius, the sole result of *good spirits*. This truly inspired style may be said to vie in imagination with the sister art of poetry, in the eccentricities of its manner, in flights of fancy, and exuberance of idea, as the accompanying specimen in some respects exhibit. Although the figures are not remarkable for elevation of character, they are full of *expression*: the man of *refined taste* will appreciate this accordingly.

H.r Alken, Del.t

A TOUCH *at the* FINE ARTS. — *A very Brilliant Effect.*

London, Published by Thos.M.c Lean, Repository of Wit & Humour, 26, Haymarket, 1824.

PLATE XII.

A very BRILLIANT *effect.*

THE *keeping* of this *piece*, is in the *first style of excellence*, although it is evident from the *showy richness* of the *colouring*, that it is not formed to last, and that the beauties, being but temporary, will fade, the *taste* too is vitiated, and notwithstanding the general effect of the outline, we cannot but condemn the absence of *chasteness* and *purity* of *method*.

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TOUCH AT THE FINE ARTS